

STEM At The Golf Course

By Pat Gross, regional director, West Region | June 2, 2017



One of the five stations on the First Green field trip involved looking inside a bluebird box and learning about wildlife habitat on the golf course.

Golf courses are wonderful living laboratories for studying nature, science and technology. Superintendent Pat Gradoville of Palos Verdes Golf Club in Palos Verdes Estates, California recently took some time to demonstrate to a group of third-graders from a local elementary school the many ways science and technology are involved in golf course maintenance. As a guideline for the field trip, Pat used the curriculum and resources provided by the First Green, an environmental and STEM education program for golf courses. The students rotated among five learning stations throughout the morning:

- 1. Seeds and Roots** – Students looked at the root systems of different plants and learned where the seeds were located on pine cones and various native plants. They even potted a small plant to take home.
- 2. Wildlife** – A local volunteer has installed several Western Bluebird houses on the golf course. The students got to look inside one of the bird boxes and see a nest full of bluebird eggs. This station included a discussion about bluebird habitat and the many animals that live on the golf course.
- 3. Equipment Used on Putting Greens** – Students used a soil probe to take samples from a practice green, learned how hole locations are changed and saw a demonstration of the

various mowers and rollers used on greens. The students also measured and recorded green speed using a USGA Stimpmeter®.

4. Water, Weather and Irrigation – Students reviewed weather data from a nearby weather station and learned how this information is used to make daily irrigation decisions. There were demonstrations of various sprinkler types including full-circle, part-circle, spray heads and drip emitters. Students also learned about portable moisture meters and watched the superintendent use a radio to turn on a few sprinklers, demonstrating the technology involved in operating the irrigation system.

5. Putting Contest – The students had some fun learning how to putt on a practice green while also learning about the environmental benefits of golf courses.

It was a fun and informative day for the students and the parent chaperons. Golf facilities that are interested in hosting a similar field trip can visit the [First Green website](#) to learn more about the different activities and resources that are available.

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